

Legislator Common Platform Device Options

A report to the Montana Legislative Council from the Office of Legislative Information Services

The Legislative Council asked OLIS in their December 6, 2021 meeting to provide a range of options for providing a Common Platform computing device for all or some of the members. The device would be intended to provide for the core technology needs of every legislator and potentially reduce the amount of technical support needed. Alternately, the Council could decide that Legislators be directed to bring their own device or there can be an inventory of devices for check out for legislators who do not have their own device. Due to staffing resource limitations, we recommend limiting the support provided by OLIS to two devices per legislator.

This report offers four options if the Council decides to provide a common platform for all or some of legislators (i.e. new legislators or until the constituent services accounts are approved), based on several assumptions outlined below.

Assumptions

While researching devices, it was assumed that it should be capable of providing access to the following services:

1. General Internet access
2. Microsoft 365 suite, including Teams, Word, Excel, etc.
3. The official email solution as provided by the Legislative Council
 - a. Optionally, access to other email solutions, including personal mail services
4. The MCA, either the:
 - a. Web version, which does not include annotations
 - b. Electronically published version via Folio (NOTE: Folio is a Windows-only application)
5. Access to the Legislator Portal solution
6. Access to LAWS II, (including Bills, Amendments in Context, etc.)
7. Web conferencing (eg. Zoom, Teams or WebEx, as needed)
8. Remote Voting

Device Comparison

Device	Screen Size	Operating System	CPU/Memory/Storage	Case and adapters (if needed)	Price Each	Extended Price for 150
Apple iPad	10.9"	Apple iOS	A14 Bionic / 64 GB	Apple Magic Keyboard and Folio case, Ethernet, Power Adapter with Lightning Connector	\$1,015	\$152,250
Samsung Android Tablet	11"	Google Android OS	Snapdragon 865+ CPU / 128 GB Memory	Samsung Book Cover Keyboard and Folio case, USB-C Gigabit Ethernet Adapter	\$964	\$144,600
Lenovo Windows Tablet	12.3"	Microsoft Windows 10/11	Intel Core i5 CPU / 8 GB RAM / 256 GB	N/A	\$1,408	\$211,200
Lenovo Windows Laptop	14"	Microsoft Windows 10/11	Intel Core i5 CPU / 8 GB / 256	N/A	\$1,716	\$257,400

Caveats

The tablet devices may be preferred over a laptop computer because they are generally more portable and easier to manage. However, they have several important disadvantages to be aware of as well.

- Tablets based on Apple's iOS or the Android operating system are generally simpler to use, set up in a consistent manner, and to manage.
- Tablets are generally less expensive than Windows devices.
- However, certain applications – the Folio MCA application, for example – depend on a Microsoft Windows operating system.
- Available options for Windows-based tablets are noticeably fewer and tend to be more expensive

Because staffing resources are limited, if a Common Platform device is provided, our ability to support personal devices may be impacted.

It's important to understand that each device a legislator brings in requires approximately 30 minutes to an hour of OLIS staff time – depending on the complexity – to set it up on the network, verify the minimum system and security requirements, mediate any shortcomings or risks (working with the legislator to get an up-to-date anti-virus application, for example), etc. If each legislator brings two devices, that's 150 to 300 hours of configuration time that OLIS must account for in its staffing resource needs. This only accounts for setup time and doesn't include support calls when a legislator runs into trouble. All of this, of course, is on top of the rest of the preparations that must be done in the months leading up to a Legislative Session. Adding another device increases this calculation by at least a third.

Minimum System Requirements for Personal Devices

To make sure that legislator's personal device will be adequate and can be properly supported, OLIS recommends that a legislator follow these minimum system requirements when bringing or purchasing personal devices:

- Processor – Intel Core i5 or AMD Ryzen 5 or better, no more than four years old
- RAM – 4 GB minimum, 8 or more recommended
- Webcam/Microphone – integrated or external, capable of 720p (1080p recommended) and 30 fps (60 fps recommended)
- A supported operating system for which security patches are being developed, currently:
 - Windows 10 version 20H2
 - Windows 11 version 21H2
 - MacOS 10.15 (Catalina)
 - Android 10 (Queen Cake)
 - iOS/iPadOS 14.8
- Security patches are current and regularly applied
- Wired or wireless network capability
- An operational and up-to-date antivirus program
- A firewall installed and operating